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## Social Activity Of Youth In Social And Cultural Measurement

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### Abstract

The aim of this study is to identify the nature of trust by modern youth on laws developed in the social and political sphere. The article illustrates the empirical research in the form of the sociological poll, which has been carried out in various regions of Kazakhstan among young people between the ages of 18-29 years. It is dedicated to the characteristic of interpersonal and institutional trust by youth. During the sociological poll it was found that the most successful in transforming society appeared to be people who have kept the necessary level of trust and mutual understanding between people, which help them to have self-confidence and to feel optimistic about the future. The article concludes that the level of social trust by youth as a factor of social activity is characterised by more trust in social networks of a microenvironment (family, relatives, friends, etc.), than to social and state institutions (police, army, business structures, trade unions).

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**Keywords:** Kazakhstani youth, trust, interpersonal trust, institutional trust, social activity;

### 1. Trust as a factor in social life

One can say without any exaggeration that the perspectives of further development in the republic for the upcoming decades are foremost associated with the youth. Social activity of the youth and its formation as a subject of modernisation is to a large extent dependent on certain policies of government and on the implementation by

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social institutions of these policies. Here, the particular importance to the problem of trust between the youth and all the social institutions is addressed.

Trust is one of the fundamentals in public relations. Human society would have been neither able to exist, nor to advance without it. The lack of trust in society always requires a more concentrated government intervention towards the regulation of social and economic relations.

In the first instance trust can be divided into categories, generalised, interpersonal and institutional.

Generalised trust is a belief that people as a mass are honest and predictable. Whoever the person deals with - either familiar or totally unfamiliar individuals - he ends up with a high probability of getting what was agreed upon.

Interpersonal trust is trust between people, family members, relatives, neighbours, countrymen and fellow workers. Interpersonal trust reflects the perceptions that the person acquired during the period of early socialisation, life experience, national character, national collective historical experience and fundamental universal moral values (Shafranov-Kutsev, n.d.).

Institutional trust is trust in social and public institutions and their representatives: the President, the Government, law enforcement agencies, trade unions, entrepreneurs etc. Institutional trust ensures social stability of people as a whole. High institutional trust encourages social and political activity and positive attitudes towards the existing politicians and organisations. Low institutional trust causes formal communication and constitutes a threat to the wellbeing of the state and society as a whole (Masamichi, Davidenko, Latov, Romashkin, & Latova, 2009, p. 24).

The ratio of institutional and interpersonal trust levels is a kind of 'thermometer' of social health. The accumulated baggage of personal trust is a form of individual human capital whereas institutional trust is a form of social capital (Masamichi et al., 2009, p. 25).

A person who has a great ability to trust others is better at building his relationships with people, quicker to engage in cooperative actions, less sensitive to failure. Trust as a capital results in the future – when possessing it, a person is more successful at reaching his goals while spending less effort.

## 2. The features of the trust standing among Kazakhstani youth

This article presents our effort to show the characteristics of trust perceptions amongst Kazakhstani youth. The empirical base of the study is the data of a sociological survey that was conducted by the Institute for Philosophy, Political Science and Religion Studies of Science Committee of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan between November and December 2012 within the framework of the project named 'Social and political activity of Kazakhstani youth'. In order to identify the nature of trust perceptions in the social and political environment, the designed questionnaire included questions aimed at identifying phenomena under consideration: namely, interpersonal and institutional trust.

The empirical study showed that the most successful in transforming society is the close community that maintained a necessary level of trust and mutual understanding between people. They help others not to lose self-confidence and to stay optimistic about the future. An immediate personal communication that is formed here serves as a basis for close, sometimes emotional, interpersonal relationships. Kinship and friendship ties that play a special role in people's lives are characterised by the highest level of trust.

The results of the survey showed that the highest level of trust among young people is trust put in their families and relatives. An absolute majority of young respondents (76,2%) expressed an absolute trust in their families and almost one fifth of them (19,3%) defined their attitude more as a trust relationship (Table 1).

Table 1. Division of young people's answers to the question: 'To what extent do you trust...' (%)

	Trust	More likely trust	More likely do not trust	Do not trust	Don't know
Family and relatives	76,2	19,3	1,1	0,2	3,2
Friends	31,7	54,0	5,7	2,7	5,9
Neighbours	15,2	50,4	17,8	8,3	8,4

Fellow workers and students	16,0	51,3	14,0	4,5	14,2
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A great trust by young people is placed in their friends. For example, almost one third of those being surveyed (31,7%) absolutely trust and more than a half (54,0%) are more likely to trust them; the attitude towards friends can be characterised as “more likely trustworthy”.

A friendly attitude was expressed by youth towards their neighbours, colleagues at work and school (Table 1).

Relationships with colleagues are more likely to be called trustworthy and friendly; many of them encourage strong and close affiliations although such groups often have to compete. Individual characteristics of people become transparent in the process of direct communication with colleagues: their demands and interests, values and perceptions. Such social and psychological processes as empathy and compassion accompany personal contacts with co-workers. Today, as much of the research suggests, more often they speak about micro associate groups at enterprises and organisations that are formed on the basis of personal trust, respect of the human or professional qualities. In a sense, they are social networks in which people interact and help each other.

A survey revealed the following tendencies: the relationship between people in rural areas – kinship, family, neighbour, friendly relations or others – are much stronger. Communication between residents of one village facilitates closer contacts and creates the atmosphere of openness and sincerity. Of particular importance is the specificity of rural life, which is different in stable relations, values and traditions.

Interpersonal trust is quite closely related to trust in government institutions. Behind the attitude towards any of the institutions stands of the attitude towards the people who represent them, personalise them and with whom, in the first place, their activity is associated. In this essay we will reflect on trust in such power structures as the President, the Government, the Parliament, local authorities, the Army, the Police, as well as civil society groups: employers, trade unions and businesses.

The results of the sociological survey indicate that most of the young people tend to trust the President, the Government, the Parliament and the Akimat - that is, those institutions of state power that are often represented by one person. This, in turn, reflects an idea of persistent traditions of paternalism not only in the collective consciousness of Kazakhstani society but also in the mindset of young people who grew up in an independent Kazakhstan.

Due to the socio-psychological characteristics, young people always tend to hope for the best. That is why there is a strong need in an institution that they could trust. It is well known that an easier task is to trust one person than a mass of people. The survey demonstrated that more than half (53,7%) of young respondents gave a high estimate of the President's activities while more than a third (37,4%) evaluated his actions as positive.

A high evaluation of the President's actions can be to some extent explained as a desire of the population to maintain stability and social order that are associated with the President's name.

The President received a high trust rating and at the same time ‘pulled out’ a positive dynamic of attitude towards the Government and the Parliament, although their trust ratings were and are still much lower than a trust rating in the President.

Russian researchers have come to the conclusion that trust in the President is not only greater than trust in any other institution but is also ‘a source’ of any other trust. When trust in the President decreases, it leads not to an increase but to a decrease of trust in other social institutions. The trust in the President is a factor that contributes to the institutional trust in general (Masamichi et al., 2009, p. 26). In our opinion, such a formulation of question is relevant in our reality as well.

Most of the young people (Table 2) place great trust in the Government (79,8%), the Parliament (Senate 70,8% and Majilis 69,3%) and local authorities (Akimat 66,9% and Maslihat 61,2%).

Table 2. Division of young people's answers to the question: ‘Do you trust or not trust the following institutions of state power?’ (%)

Trust	More likely	More likely	Do not trust	Don't know
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		trust	do not trust		
Government	36,2	43,6	6,8	4,4	9,0
Senate of the Parliament	26,5	44,3	10,3	4,4	14,5
Majilis of the Parliament	24,3	45,0	11,3	4,6	14,7
Akimat of your province, city	20,6	46,3	12,1	6,0	14,9
Maslihat of your province	19,0	42,2	12,9	7,3	18,6

Young Kazakhstani people towards the Parliament with both Senate and Majilis expressed a friendly attitude, although it is worth mentioning that the level of trust in the elective bodies is lower than the trust in the Government.

The trustworthiness of the local authorities among the population is testified by the survey data. The percentage of young respondents who absolutely trust Akimat is 20,6%, who are more likely to trust it – 46,3%, who are more likely not to trust it – 12,1%, do not trust Akimat – 6,0% and those who were unsure of their answer – 14,9%. Even fewer young people expressed their trust in respect to Maslihat. The results of the survey provide the evidence of a lower level of trust in the local authority than in the central government.

Local authority is a power that is the closest possible to the population. It is formed directly by the people, for the people and is exercised by the people. The higher the satisfaction from the municipal services by the young people, the higher the level of trust they place in them.

In our opinion, the particular estimated figures of the level of trust in the local authorities also imply an evaluation of its activities. The reasons for the lower level of credibility towards the local authorities are: first, the dissatisfaction of young people with municipal services, and second, a political culture of the Kazakhstani society as a whole where respect for the Supreme power is always higher than for the local one.

The survey indicates that in general the Kazakhstani youth has a positive attitude towards the Army; 23,9% of the respondents took a position of absolute trust in it and 36,6% reported that they are more likely to trust it. Therefore, the percentage of those who do not trust the Army is 20,9%; 18,6% of respondents found it difficult to answer this question (Table 3).

Table 3. Division of young people's answers to the question: 'To what extent do you trust...?' (%)

	Trust	More likely trust	More likely do not trust	Do not trust	Don't know
The Army	23,9	36,6	11,1	9,8	18,6
The Police	19,3	34,8	19,5	11,8	14,6

Young people's attitudes to the Army, in our opinion, are the key to understanding its place in the system of young people's values. We can assume that the formation of young people's value orientations in relation to the Army is influenced by many factors, including the situation in the Kazakhstani Army.

As the results of the survey showed, slightly more than a half of young people (54,1%) think of the police with trust while almost one third of the respondents (31,3%) do not trust it. 14,6% of those asked found it difficult to answer the question.

Thus, one can observe a low level of trust in the police. Ideally, policemen need to be closer to an ordinary person. By considering their experience of interaction with the police at a place of residence, in the streets and on the roads, civilians do not only evaluate its actions but also the government actions in general. If they are ineffective and not respected by the citizens, the police create numerous problems: it reduces the credibility of the Government and its key institutions as well as creating an atmosphere of fear and insecurity. On the contrary, the police who enjoy the respect and trust of the citizens are a prerequisite for effective government and social well being.

The attitude of the young citizens of Kazakhstan towards such structures as employers, trade unions and entrepreneurs as a mirror reflects the contradictions of the establishment of civil society. One of the components in the valuable and motivational area of employment is the interaction with the employers. One of the interesting facts is that more than a half of the young respondents treat their employers with trust in the organisations where they are employed. A high level of trust was expressed by 13,6% of those being surveyed and 40,8% spoke of a friendly attitude. However, an unequivocal distrust in the employers was expressed by 7,7% of respondents and 18,4% are more likely not to trust them. Almost every fifth person (19,6%) found difficulties in responding.

Trade unions as social institutions have a special role in dealing with problems of youth, especially with social and labour issues. A stand that a trade union takes in respect to youth has an impact on the success of the process of its adaptation, joining the team, the ability of young people to defend their interests and to conduct an equal dialogue with an employer.

The analysis of the survey results revealed that in the collective mindset of the Kazakhstani youth the level of trust in trade unions is not high: one third of the young respondents (33%) to a varying degree expressed distrust, 44% chose a "trust" response and 23,3% did not manage to answer the question.

The least credible, from the considered institutions in the young people's point of view, are business structures. The survey demonstrated that the proportions of those who trust and do not trust them are almost equal - 38,9% and 36,9%, while 9,4% of respondents absolutely trust and 14,4% do not trust businesses at all. Almost one quarter of surveyed people (24,2%) were undecided. Young people are distracted by the pragmatism and greed of many businessmen as well as by their social irresponsibility to the public.

True, but not declarative, trusting relationships are generally present in very narrow circles: they are inside small working groups and communities, primarily in the family or among close relatives, colleagues at work and in the company of friends (Gudkov, 2012). Such a kind of relationship is widespread in the rural areas. Here, formal structures of interaction combine with informal relations and that gives them a distinct character and strength. This situation can be explained in two ways: firstly, as many researchers assume, the strengthening of family and kinship ties in the system of informal relationships that took place in the post-soviet era is rolled back to the traditions of a pre-modern society; secondly, such a kind of communication proves an adaptation of both individuals and social groups (family) to the changed socio-economic conditions (Werschinin, n.d.).

The level of social trust among young people as a factor of social activity can be characterised to a larger extent as a trust in the social networks of a microenvironment rather than in the social and government institutions. This type of trust contributes to the predominance of norms and rules of social networking in social interaction, which leads to the alienation of youth and formal institutions.

When young people are in the process of achieving a social position, informal social relationships begin to dominate since they, as opposed to civil structures, are limited to the "minimum" social trust and to a greater extent direct young people on the acquisition of useful contacts than on the interaction with formal institutions. In our opinion, this situation hinders the processes of youth's integration as well as the improvement of social mobility.

This problem is especially relevant for young people living in rural areas. It is known that young people form the highest percentage of rural-urban migration in Kazakhstan.

A Kazakhstani researcher, M. Makhmutova (2013), points out that among young working migrants in Almaty 44,7% are salaried employees. However, only 20,3% of tested people are formal workers or have an employment contract and only this category receives pension fund contributions from their employees. 33,5% of respondents work on the basis of a verbal agreement and a further 5% are informal workers. The employment services and recruitment agencies of Almaty do not work with such a vulnerable group as young migrants. When responding to a question of how they found a job in Almaty, just 3 out of 640 working young people mentioned recruitment agencies and only 1 – employment services. 326 people found their job independently and 308 respondents – through relatives and acquaintances (p. 70).

This situation leads to the fact that young people are more confident in the effectiveness of informal social relations in comparison with the support of the state or civil society. The level of social trust depends on the ability of government to counteract the processes of differentiation, resulting in the polarisation of an unequal distribution of both material and spiritual wealth.

Generally, a trustworthy attitude of youth towards the government institutions, as well as a high level of

interpersonal trust and support of a political course of the country has to become a push for the development of social activity and civil society, as well as an increase in responsibility. This is not only for oneself and ones' family but also for the government as a whole. But it has not happened yet. Young people of today can be characterised as expecting initiative and changes “from the top-down” and not willing to take a great responsibility. To a certain extent this is due to the historically formed conformity and paternalism of the civil consciousness of the Kazakhstani people (“Koncepciya gosudarstvennoi molodezhnoi politiki,” 2013, p. 9). Therefore, young citizens have etastit orientations. They expect guarantees from the government – employment, social security, and satisfaction of basic needs. There is one more feature of the youth's mindset: low level of trust in the structures of civil society (employers, trade unions and entrepreneurs).

It is worth mentioning that the ethnic factor in many cases significantly affects the social evaluation of the respondents. The analysis revealed that the Russian youth are more critical in their assessment of almost all of the considered structures of power and social institutions.

Trust as a social resource and a social capital of reforms has a dual nature: on the one hand, being formed within the social groups and having become valuable, in time it is translated outwards; on the other hand, the effectiveness of socio-economic reforms make young citizens proud of their country. Everything together fosters the growth of confidence among young people (Slonsky, 2010, p.245).

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